

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ECON, EC, GR
SUBJECT: PAPANDREOU ON EC ENTRY

REF: A) 77 ATHENS A-51; B) 77 ATHENS 235

1. SUMMARY: IN JANUARY 16 PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON RATIFICATION OF SECOND EC FINANCIAL PROTOCOL (SEE REF A), PASOK LEADER ANDREAS PAPANDREOU DEMANDED OPENING OF "EC FILE" AND ARGUED THAT ENTRY NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT ONLY A MEANS TO EXACT ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS FROM GREECE BUT A VEHICLE FOR POLITICAL PRESSURE AS WELL ON ISSUES OF THE AEGEAN, CYPRUS AND NATO. IN REPLY, COORDINATION MINISTER RALLIS DENIED THAT ENTRY NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN LINKED WITH NATIONAL OR POLITICAL ISSUES, ASSURED THAT ALL INTERESTED PARTIES WOULD BE FULLY INFORMED ON THE ACCESSION AGREEMENT BEFORE RATIFICATION, AND ADDED THAT "IT IS POSSIBLE
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THAT THE ISSUE WILL ALSO BE BROUGHT TO THE PEOPLE." SPEAKING TO JOURNALISTS AFTER THE DEBATE, PAPANDREOU SAID HE WELCOMED THE COORDINATION MINISTER'S ALLUSION TO A REFERENDUM ON EC ACCESSION WHICH, IN TURN, PROMPTED A DENIAL BY RALLIS THAT THE GOG HAD ANY INTENTION OF SUBJECTING THE ACCESSION ISSUE TO A POPULAR REFERENDUM.
END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, PASOK LEADER PAPANDREOU EXPANDED THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE SECOND EC FINANCIAL PROTOCOL TO REITERATE HIS VIEWS ON THE LARGER IMPLICATIONS OF EC ACCESSION. HE ARGUED THAT THE COMMUNITY WAS LIKELY TO OFFER FULL MEMBERSHIP TO GREECE ONLY IN STAGES AND AT A SLOWER PACE THAN DESIRED BY THE GOG BECAUSE OF THE BACKWARD STATE OF THE GREEK ECONOMY AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF REVISING THE EC COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) TO INCLUDE MEDITERRANEAN PRODUCTS. HE STATED THAT DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD-- WHICH HE CLAIMED WOULD TAKE TEN YEARS--GREECE WOULD HAVE NO VOICE IN FORMULATING EC POLICIES.

3. PAPANDREOU ALSO CRITICIZED THE PRIME MINISTER'S FORTH-COMING VISIT TO BRUSSELS AND OTHER WEST EUROPEAN CAPITALS (REF B) AS ILL-TIMED IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT EC AGRICULTURAL POLICIES COULD NOT BE DEALT WITH UNTIL AFTER THE FRENCH GENERAL ELECTIONS AND THAT THE TRIP WOULD SUBJECT THE PRIME MINISTER TO "A BARRAGE OF PRESSURE" TO MAKE A "SADAT-TYPE GESTURE" TO RESOLVE GREEK-TURKISH DIFFERENCES. HE CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT THE PARLIAMENT AND THE GREEK PEOPLE SHOULD BE KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF THE DETAILS OF THE EC NEGOTIATIONS SINCE MEMBERSHIP WILL HAVE AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT BEARING ON GREECE'S FUTURE.

4. IN HIS RESPONSE TO PAPANDREOU, COORDINATION MINISTER RALLIS DENIED THAT EC MEMBERSHIP WAS TIED TO AEGEAN OR NATO ISSUES AND INSISTED THAT THE GOG WILL NOT ACCEPT A LESS-THAN-EQUAL MEMBER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHIP IN THE COMMUNITY. HE ASSURED THE PARLIAMENT THAT THE FULL TEXT OF THE ACCESSION AGREEMENT WOULD BE MADE PUBLIC BEFORE IT WAS SUBMITTED FOR RATIFICATION AND ADDED THAT "IT IS POSSIBLE THE ISSUE WILL ALSO BE BROUGHT TO THE PEOPLE." MINISTER FOR EC AFFAIRS KONTOGIORSHIS, CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEBATE, STATED THAT THE PARLIAMENT AND THE GREEK PUBLIC ARE ONLY EXCLUDED FROM INFORMAION WHICH MIGHT UNDER INE GREECE'S NEGOTIATING LEVERAGE AND REASSURED HIS LISTENERS THAT THE GOG HAD FORMULATED ITS POSITIONS TO SAFEGUARD THE INTERESTS OF THE GREEK FARMERS, WORKERS AND THE NATION AS A WHOLE.

5. FOLLOWING THE DEBATE, PAPANDREOU, SEIZING ON RALLIS' IMPLIED WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE ISSUE OF EC ACCESSION TO THE PEOPLE, DECLARED THAT "WE (PASOK) WOULD GLADLY ACCEPT THE REFERENDUM HINTED AT BY THE COORDINATION MINISTER. DOES MR. RALLIS REALIZE THAT OVER 45 PERCENT OF THE GREEK PEOPLE WOULD VOTE AGAINST EC ECTRY TODAY?" IN A SUBSEQUENT STATEMENT, RALLIS DENIED ANY MENTION OF A REFERENDUM AND AFFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT "HAS NO SUCH THOUGHT OR INTENTION. NOR IS IT NECESSARY."

6. COMMENT: THE HEATED PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE OVER EC ACCESSION

SPARKED BY THE ROUTINE TASK OF RATIFYING THE FINANCIAL PROTOCOL--
WHICH IN THE END WAS APPROVED BY ALL PARTIES--REFLECTS PAPANDREOU'S
UNDIMISHED INTENTION TO KEEP THE MATTER OF EC ACCESSION BEFORE
THE PUBLIC, PRESS FOR A POPULAR REFERENDUM ON THE SUBJECT,
IF POSSIBLE, AND, INCREASINGLY TO POLITICIZE THE ISSUE BOTH
TO COMPLICATE THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND TO MAKE ULTIMATE
RATIFICATION MORE DIFFICULT.
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